

Remarks

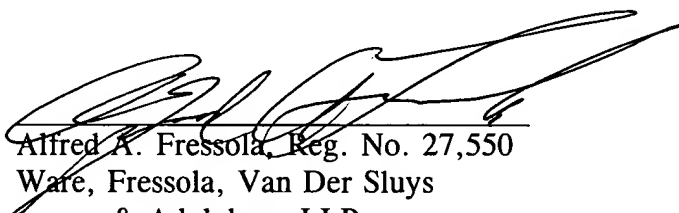
This preliminary amendment is filed for the purpose of placing the application into standard U.S. format and to eliminate multiple dependent claims. Consideration and allowance of the claims is earnestly solicited.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and a claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**".

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADEIn the Specification:In the Claims:

1 1. (Amended) A method for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental X-
2 ray photography into a reading device for the images taken on the plates to be read, wherein
3 the plates (1) are each in a casing which is used during exposure of the plate to X-rays,
4 wherein there is a housing (2) having a door (14) dimensioned for receipt of plates and
5 wherein there is a conveyor (9) adjacent the housing, characterized in that the method
6 comprises the steps of:

7 - removing the plates (1) from their casings used during the photographing step,
8 - inserting the plates in [a] the housing (2) provided with [a] the door (14) and
9 substantially protected from light, said housing forming an intermediate storage for
10 the plates,
11 - stacking the plates to form a pack in said housing, the plates being subjected to a
12 force pulling or pressing them towards [a] the conveyor (9) extending to the adjacency
13 of the housing, and
14 - feeding the plates from said housing by means of [a] the conveyor (9), the conveyor
15 each time gripping the nearest plate in the pack so as to forward the plates in
16 sequence along the feeding path.

1 2. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 1, wherein the housing has a bottom
2 (13), characterised in that the bottom (13) of the housing (2) is inclined towards the conveyor
3 (9) so that the plates (1) in the pack are [attracted] drawn towards the conveyor by force of
4 gravity.

1 3. (Amended) A method as defined in claim [1 or] 2, characterised in that the
2 pack of plates is pushed towards the conveyor (9) by means of a pushing device, such as a
3 rolling roll (15) located behind the pack.

1 4. (Amended) A method as defined in [any of the preceding claims] claim 3,
2 characterised in that the image [plates] plate (1) [comprising] includes a magnetic metal part
3 [are] which is attracted towards the conveyor (9) by means of a magnet (12).

1 5. (Amended) A method as defined in [any of the preceding claims] claim 4,
2 characterised in that the conveyor (9) transfers image plates (1) from the housing (2) onto the
3 path of a slide (3) integrated in the reading device, and that the slide grips the plate entering
4 its path each time and brings the plates one by one to the reading step.

1 6. (Amended) A method as defined in claim 5, characterised in that the conveyor
2 (9) [consists of] comprises a belt or a chain [conducted] positioned laterally of the housing
3 (2).

1 8. (Amended) A method as defined in claim [6 or] 7, characterised in that the
2 belt or the chain acting as a conveyor (9) moves stepwise.

1 9. (Amended) A method as defined in [any of claims 5-] claim 8, characterised
2 in that the slide (3) of the reading device makes a reciprocating movement, returning a plate
3 (1) whose image has been read onto the conveyor (9), which subsequently removes the plate
4 from the process.

1 11.[.] (Amended) An apparatus for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental
2 X-ray photography into a reading device for the images taken on the plates to be read,
3 characterised in that the apparatus comprises a housing (2) which is provided with a door
4 (14) and substantially protected from light, the housing forming an intermediate storage for
5 image plates received and stacked therein, that a conveyor (9) extends to the adjacency of the
6 housing while the plates stacked in the housing are subjected to a force pulling or pressing
7 them towards the conveyor, and that the conveyor is provided with gripping means (16) to
8 engage with the plates one by one, in order to forward [them] the plates in sequence along
9 the feeding path.

1 12. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 11, characterised in that the
2 housing (2) has a bottom (13) [of the housing (2)] which is inclined towards the conveyor (9)

3 so that the plates (1) arranged as a pack are [attracted] drawn towards the conveyor by force
4 of gravity.

1 13. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim 12, characterised in that a freely
2 rolling roll (15) [has been] is disposed in the housing (2) in order to push the pack of plates
3 towards the conveyor (9).

1 14. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in [any of claims 11-] claim 13,
2 characterised in that it further comprises a magnet (12) [in order] so as to attract image
3 plates (1) equipped with a magnetic metal part towards the conveyor (9).

1 15. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in [any of claims 11-] claim 14,
2 characterised in that the conveyor (9) comprises [a preferably] an endless belt or chain which
3 is conducted laterally of the housing (2) and moves image plates (1) in sequence onto the
4 path of the slide (3) integrated in the reading device, and in that the slide [has been] is
5 disposed to grip the plate entering its path each time, [bringing] so as to bring the plates one
6 by one to the image reading step.

1 16. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in [claims 14 and] claim 15, characterised
2 in that the conveyor [consists of] comprises two parallel belts (9), between which at least one
3 magnet (12) is placed to attract the image plates (1) towards the belts.

1 17. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in claim [15 or] 16, characterised in that
2 the conveyor comprises a belt (9) which moves from the top to the bottom, and that the
3 magnet (12) is placed at a location lower than the bottom (13) of the housing (2) so as to
4 keep the image plates (1) in contact with the belt during the transfer of the plates.

1 18. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in [any of claims 11-] claim 17,
2 characterised in that the conveyor is a vertically moving toothed belt (9) with a tooth interval
3 equalling the width of an image plate (1) so as to allow the plate to fit in-between the teeth.

1 19. (Amended) An apparatus as defined in [any of claims 11-] claim 18,
2 characterised in that it comprises a plate-like cover (11) covering the conveyor (9),
3 [allowing] so as to allow the image plates (1) to pass between the conveyor and the cover
4 within an interstice dimensioned to equal the thickness of the plates.

In the Specification:

Paragraph beginning at line 14 of page 3 has been amended as follows:

5 The movement of the belt or chain acting as a conveyor is preferably stepped with a
step length appropriately slightly longer than the image plate dimension in the direction of
movement. The conveyor belt or similar device will thus grip the closest plate of the plate
pack in the housing and remove it from the pack before stopping at the end of the step, and
the next plate in the pack is subsequently allowed to press against the conveyor. The

conveyor transfers the plate in one or more steps into a position where the reader slide can grip the plate and transfer it to the reading step. The slide may be adapted to make reciprocating movements so as to, after the plate has been read and perhaps subsequently cleared, return the plate onto the conveyor, the conveyor being immobilised over the entire duration of these operations. With its following step, the conveyor removes the plate that has been read from the process, e.g. by simply letting it drop from the conveyor, while simultaneously bringing the following plate to the location of the reader slide.

In the Abstract:

Paragraph beginning at line 1 of page 10 has been amended as follows:

Abstract of the Disclosure

The invention relates to a method and an apparatus for feeding image plates (1) used in intraoral dental X-ray photography into a reading device. During the reading step an excited phosphorus layer on the plate (1) is scanned with a laser beam and is converted into a visible image on a display screen or a film. In accordance with the invention, the excited image plates (1) are removed from their protective bags and are stacked into a housing (2) which acts as their intermediate storage and is protected from light, from where the plates are gripped by a conveyor, such as a toothed belt (16), to be fed [forwards] forward. The plates can be pulled or pressed e.g. by a magnet (12) and/or a pushing device (15) towards a conveyor conducted laterally of the housing. [The conveyor (9) may comprise gripping means (16), with which the conveyor entrains the image plate which is closest each time and

moves it forward on the transfer path onto the path of the slide integrated in the reading device. The slide grips the plate which gets within its reach each time and transfers it to the reading step for the image to be read and the plate to be cleared. The slide may make a reciprocating movement so as to return the plates which have been read onto the conveyor

5 (9), which then also carries out removal of the plates.